

North Treatment Facility Project

Summary of the Stakeholder Workshop held August 8, 2000

King County Department of Natural Resources

August 2000



Clean Water – A Sound Investment

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Introduction

In November 1999, King County approved its Regional Wastewater Services Plan. One aspect of this plan includes building a new regional wastewater treatment facility somewhere in north King or south Snohomish County by 2010. King County is now beginning the process to site the new treatment plant, its associated conveyance and marine outfall.

A public involvement program has been developed for this project. The goal of the program is to inform and involve interested and affected constituencies in a manner that is far-reaching and inclusive. Activities have included public open houses, community leadership interviews, and the formation of a siting advisory committee.

As part of this public involvement effort, the County held a stakeholder workshop in August, 2000. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit input from parties that may have a special role or interest in the project. The fourteen attendees included representatives from community and environmental groups, utility districts, Snohomish County staff, and federal and state regulatory agencies. (See Appendix I)

Major Messages from the Workshop

- The stakeholders were concerned about the environmental impacts of the treatment facilities and especially impacts associated with the marine outfall. Potential environmental benefits, such as water reuse and on-site mitigation options, were also discussed.
- Some of the stakeholders felt that the County has done a good job of getting out in the local communities. The stakeholders want to see the County continue to make the public involvement program meaningful and far-reaching. They also urged the County to consider its credibility and "do what you say you're going to do."
- There were few comments on the draft siting goals and draft policy siting criteria. Generally, the stakeholders thought that the draft siting goals and criteria addressed issues and concerns adequately.
- The stakeholders appreciated being invited to the workshop and asked to be involved at other key decisions points in the siting process.

This report summarizes the comments, questions and responses from the workshop.

Workshop Format

For the first part of the workshop, King County staff presented an overview of the project. Specific aspects of the site selection process were then presented, including the environmental and engineering constraints, the draft criteria, and detailed evaluation questions. The attendees were asked to share their comments, questions and concerns, including:

- reactions to the overall approach to the siting process;
- "lessons learn" from other projects that they could share with us;
- comments on the siting goals and criteria, and
- suggestions on the best way to involve the stakeholders in the siting process.

Summary of Comments and Responses

Marine Outfall

The marine outfall received a great deal of discussion. The stakeholders were concerned about how the outfall could impact marine habitat and salmon. There were many technical questions about the methods and parameters of the marine outfall studies being done in Puget Sound. County staff explained the extent and timing of the studies and how these would tie in with the overall wastewater facilities siting process.

There was a question about the specific locations of the marine sampling stations and if these would affect the location of the outfall. County staff noted that the sampling information would of course be used in the siting process, but that the specific sampling locations are based on the need to gather environmental information to calibrate a Puget Sound-wide model and site accessibility. The sampling locations do not determine the outfall location.

It was asked whether the siting process was taking into account marine preserve areas. County staff noted that existing or known areas—such as anchorage areas and the marine preserve area near Edmonds—are not being considered. Other restrictions (including environmental, land use, etc.) will be considered for specific sites during the environmental review process which will take place later in the siting process.

Participants acknowledged that the information being collected by the county was valuable and requested that it be made available to other groups and agencies. Staff noted that the marine outfall siting study supplements other County programs, including the marine water quality and beach monitoring programs and the County's Endangered Species Act response. The county has already developed a partnership with the University of Washington to collect and disseminate information, and has begun sharing the information with local jurisdictions.

Treatment Technology Issues

There were a number of comments and questions about treatment and conveyance issues. County staff stated that the plant would use secondary treatment, but that the site would need to accommodate reuse options and future technology and/or new regulations. The minimum site size for the treatment plant will be 25 acres, however, a larger site would be ideal. Even at the minimum size, the site will accommodate the required facilities and water reuse. Because of land requirements, wetlands will not be used to treat wastewater.

The group discussed the County's water reuse program. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of considering water reclamation and described the potential benefits of reusing water for groundwater recharge, stream flows and salmon habitat.

There was concern about the affects of plant construction and operation on wetlands and other habitat areas. The County will address these concerns in the draft policy siting criteria and during the site-specific environmental review process that will take place later in the siting process.

In response to questions about combined sewers, County staff stated that there would be no combined sewer overflow facilities in the new system because the area does not have combined sewers (current engineering and regulatory standards require separated sewers in new sewer systems). Participants also asked about control of inflow and infiltration (I/I) in the system and were informed about the County's on-going I/I program.

Participants asked whether the location of the treatment facility will affect growth in the service area or change the service area. County staff responded that regional wastewater services planning will meet projected treatment needs within our service area. However, the plant location would not change growth projections or the service area boundary.

There was a concern about the distance of the plant from the outfall and a question about whether the length of the conveyance lines would increase potential environmental impacts. The County is aware of these potential impacts. This is one reason that the environmental review for this project will be looking at all components of the system including the treatment plant, outfall, the conveyance lines going into the plant, and the lines from the plant to the outfall.

Draft Policy Siting Criteria

Participants generally felt that the criteria were adequate and were pleased with the level of study the County is undertaking for this project (particularly the marine studies). There was more focus on the siting process than on the siting criteria.

Based, in part, on comments received throughout the public involvement process, the Draft Policy Siting Criteria have been revised. The current version is included with this summary. (See Appendix II)

Public Involvement and the Siting Process

Participants emphasized the need for meaningful public involvement, and suggested a number of public involvement tools, including design charettes, email listserves and discussion groups, site visits, and possibly a series of newspaper articles.

Generally, the stakeholders felt that the County is doing an acceptable job both with studying impacts and involving the public in the project. There was strong interest in having the County partner with other agencies and share the information they collect with local jurisdictions and environmental organizations. Staff noted that the County is already working with the University of Washington and shares information with local jurisdictions. The participants also urged the County to continue to involve residents and local communities in the siting process.

Next Steps

Participants expressed an interest in continuing to be involved, especially at key decision points during the process.

The County will:

- provide stakeholders with current information about the process, including meeting and hearing dates and decisions reached;
- make County staff available to meet with individuals and groups to discuss the siting process;
- meet with specific interest groups, such as regulatory agencies or staff from local jurisdictions; and
- invite this stakeholder group to meet and share perspectives at the next major decision point—when a list of potential sites is announced to the public.

The County believes that the continued involvement of the stakeholder group is important because of the input they offer about the siting process, their ability to share information about the process with their groups and constituencies, and the oversight they provide to the public involvement process. We look forward to the continued involvement of the stakeholder group in this process.

Appendix I - Stakeholder Workshop Attendees

Vern Arnold, Martha Lake Community Club

John Avery, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Bill Clements, Richmond Beach Community Council

Carol Cloen, WA State Dept of Natural Resources

Duane Fagergren, Puget Sound Action Team

Peter Hahn, Snohomish County Public Works

Jeff Hall, Citizens for Natural Habitat

Heather Killian, Friends of the Earth

Marc Krandel, Snohomish County Parks

Frances Murphy, Brackett's Landing Foundation

Don Norman, Adopt A Beach

Pat Sumption, Sierra Club Cascade Chapter

Art Wadekamper, Shoreline Waste Management District

Craig Young, Snohomish County Surface Water Management

Appendix II - Draft Policy Siting Criteria as of August 25, 2000

COMMUNITY

C-1 - Community Impacts

C-1A. King County shall seek NTF sites that are compatible with surrounding land and marine uses.

C-1B. King County shall seek NTF sites that can be appropriately and effectively mitigated for potential impacts to the community such as noise, visual, odor, and traffic effects.

C-1C. King County shall seek NTF sites that are consistent with the Growth Management Act.

C-2 - Cultural Resources

C-2A. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize impacts to known significant cultural resources.

C-3 - Community Amenity

C-3A. King County shall seek NTF sites where it is possible to enhance and provide benefit to the community, through appropriate and effective mitigation.

C-3B. King County shall seek opportunities to enhance and provide benefit to the environment, such as habitat, wetlands, surface waters, groundwater, and/or cultural resources through appropriate mitigation of project impacts.

TECHNICAL

T-1 - Size, Shape, and Topography

T-1A. King County shall select NTF sites that provide sufficient area to accommodate the proposed facilities, an appropriate buffer, and, at the treatment plant, room for future treatment process upgrades.

T-1B. King County shall seek NTF sites that do not require extensive alteration due to steep slopes and/or hazard mitigation.

T-1C. King County shall seek a north treatment plant site that is located at an elevation that allows efficient use of energy for conveyance of sewage to the plant and conveyance of treated effluent to Puget Sound.

T-2 - Geology, Soils, and Groundwater

T-2A. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize exposure to geologic hazards, poor soil conditions, and unsuitable subsurface geology.

T-2B. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize the need for dewatering during facilities construction or operation.

T-3 - Site Access and Utilities

T-3A. King County shall select NTF sites with safe and adequate vehicle access to and from major roadways or sites where safe and adequate access can be developed.

T-3B. King County shall seek NTF sites with adequate, reliable, and cost competitive power supply or for which the County can obtain adequate supply.

T-3C. King County shall select NTF sites with adequate emergency response services (fire and medical) or for which the County can develop or obtain adequate services.

T-4 - Conveyance Routes

T-4A. King County shall seek conveyance routes that minimize the complexity of conveying flows to and from the north treatment plant site.

T-5 - System Reliability

T-5A. King County shall select NTF sites that provide for effective emergency flow management.

T-6 – Sustainability

T-6A. King County shall seek NTF sites that support opportunities for reuse of treatment process by-products.

T-7 - Land Acquisition, Easements, Right-of-Way, and Permitting

T-7A. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize permit and acquisition complexity in order to avoid or minimize risk of project delay and cost overruns.

ENVIRONMENTAL

E-1 - Biological Resource Protection

E-1A. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize adverse effects to biological resources including threatened, endangered and candidate species as listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; endangered, threatened,

sensitive and candidate species listed under WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species, and Species of Concern; and/or officially designated local natural resources.

E-1B. King County shall seek outfall locations that minimize effects on sensitive near-shore and off-shore marine resources.

E-2 - Water Resources Protection

E-2A. King County shall select NTF sites that protect municipal drinking water wells and potable groundwater resources.

E-2B. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize adverse effects to local surface waters.

E-2C. King County shall not select NTF sites that have a significant flood hazard.

E-3 - Human Health

E-3A. King County shall select NTF outfall locations that protect public health related to recreation, fishing, shellfish harvesting, seafood consumption, tribal usage or other human use activities.

E-4 - Contamination

E-4A. King County shall seek NTF sites that minimize disruption or mobilization of hazardous materials into the environment.

FINANCIAL

F-1 - Overall System Cost

F-1A. King County shall seek NTF sites that will result in reasonable lifetime costs for the plant, conveyance activities, and outfall considering acquisition costs, capital costs, operations, maintenance and mitigation.

F-1B. King County shall seek NTF sites that ensure the financial security and bonding capacity for the wastewater system and meet the County's legal and contractual commitments regarding the use of sewer revenues to pay for sewer expenses.